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NEWS POT

BIG STORIES. BOILED DOWN.

1. PAPA ROACH were joined by a colossal, inflatable baby when they performed on the roof of 'Best Buy' in West Hollywood, Los Angeles on June 18. The baby appears on the cover of the band's new album, 'LoveHateTragedy'. No admission fee was charged for the outdoor gig, although punters had to buy a copy of the album to gain entry. Papa Roach played three songs from their 'Infest' debut, along with four new songs, before signing autographs for their fans. "Does our baby look kind of retarded to you?" asked a grinning Jacoby Shaddix, receiving an affirmative response from the assembled throng.

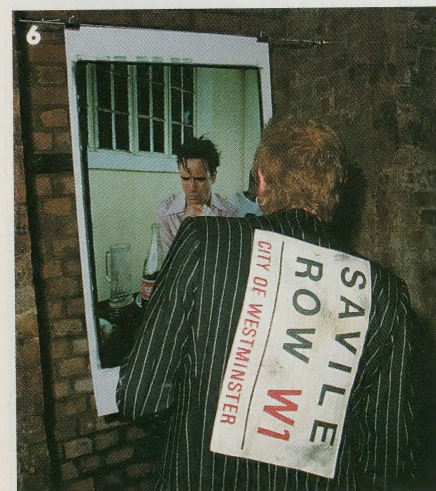
2. SYSTEM OF A DOWN frontman Serj Tankian was clearly beside himself at Los Angeles' Roseland venue on June 10, when he got to meet one of his heroes, David Bowie. The weird-eyed legend was playing one of the first shows on his worldwide tour to promote his new album, 'Heathen', and countless LA musicians turned out to see him in action. Members of **BON JOVI**, **FOO FIGHTERS** and **BLONDIE** attended the aftershow bash; along with Jim Thirlwell, aka art-rock mentalist **FOETUS**, and Hollywood star **SUSAN SARANDON**.

3. and 4. THE VINES seemed to enjoy the chance to be photographed with girls from the breast-centric 'Hooters' restaurant chain at US radio station KROQ's 10th annual Weenie Roast on June 16. The star-studded gig, which took place in Irvine, California, features live performances from Rob Zombie, Papa Roach, System Of A Down, P.O.D., Incubus, Puddle Of Mudd, Bad Religion, Jimmy Eat World, Hoobastank and The Strokes. Diminutive dork Moby also appeared at the event, fresh from his performance with 'Camp Freddy' (see report on page 6). **JACK OSBOURNE** was also seen loitering in the backstage area, muttering "This is diet Ozzfest!" to himself. He's clearly not a well boy. The Vines' debut album is reviewed on page 50.

5. ANTHRAX gave Kerrang! an exclusive preview of their forthcoming new album at the legendary CBGB's club in New York on June 15. The new songs are unmistakably Anthrax, but the band sound considerably heavier and more energetic than they have in years. "We've always prided ourselves on being songwriters first and foremost," states guitarist Scott Ian. "I think we've excelled ourselves this time round. I haven't felt this good about an album for a long time." Titled 'We've Come For You All', the album is due for release in September via Nuclear Blast. Songs include 'Nobody Knows Anything', 'Refuse To Be Denied', 'Black Dahlia', 'Ghost' and 'Superhero'. The band plan to play UK dates before the end of 2002.

6. BUSH frontman Gavin Rossdale has contributed some instrumental music to accompany 'Crucifixion', a new exhibition by controversial conceptual artist **SEBASTIAN HORSLEY**. Appropriately located in London's Crucifix Lane, the exhibition comprises the artist's shocking visual portrayals of Christ's crucifixion, including a film which features Horsley actually being crucified. "I reasoned that I wouldn't be able to produce a great work of art without that pain and anxiety," states the artist. "I wanted to break limits and test the boundaries of reality." 'Crucifixion' runs until July 18.

7. EMINEM has reportedly become a terrorist target after dressing up as Osama Bin Laden in the 'Without Me' promo clip. British tabloid newspapers reported that the foul-mouthed rap star had hired extra bodyguards, updated his home security system and contacted counter-terrorism specialists after US government officials had warned him about the possibility of retaliation from the Al-Qaeda terrorist network. Eminem's record label, Interscope, have since refuted the claims. Says a spokesperson: "Contrary to a fallacy reported in a British newspaper, there have been no threats made against Eminem."





THE STREETWALKIN' CHEETAHS/BROKEN TEETH

In Rock We Trust

(Changes One)

KKK

Two garage-rock hopefuls slug it out on one CD.

IN LIGHT of the current garage-rock boom led by the likes of The Hives and the White Stripes, it's inevitable that lesser bands will attempt to jump on their coat tails, hoping to be dragged into the lime-light behind them. Thankfully, Californians The Streetwalkin' Cheetahs (as in 'I'm a street walkin' cheetah with a heart full of napalm', from The Stooges' 'Search & Destroy') throw a different slant on this well-worn style. And while the band obviously still regularly attend the altar of the MC5; 'Strangled By Love' has an aggressive '80s hardcore kick to it that is unmistakably inspired by Black Flag.

Broken Teeth, however, sound like a lame pub rock band playing AC/DC covers, to the point where 'Crash-Landing Affair' is a virtual 'Let There Be Rock', slightly re-written and with its soul ripped right out. Utterly uninspired. Round One to The Streetwalkin' Cheetahs, then.

JAMES SHERRY

THE BLOOD BROTHERS

March On Electric Children

(Three One)

KKKK

Grisly splash of baroque hardcore that's given Ross Robinson a silky boner.

IT'S THE over-riding sense of chaos and deranged creativity here that you'll notice first; the explosions of ragged riffage and barely reigned-in shrieking, the way The Blood Brothers take some messy imaginary scrap between Icarus Line and ATD-1 as starting point for the vicious sonic body-blows that follow.

But the twist lies in the closing track 'American Vultures', where all the preceding references to decaying modern culture are tied

together in a grotesquely sardonic, Tom-Waits-gone-vooodoo piano singalong, a grim laugh at something particularly unfunny. If Marilyn Manson's iconoclasm were anything more than a schlocky affectation he might make a record as disturbing, as viciously intelligent as this. Ross Robinson's patronage for their next album should set this timebomb ticking close to America's mainstream heart.

STEVIE CHICK



16 HORSEPOWER

Folklore

(Gitterhouse)

KKKK

Best album yet from Colorado's answer to The Bad Seeds.

A COUPLE of years on from the marvellous 'Secret South', 16 Horsepower return mining even richer terrain. David Eugene Edwards' doom-laden vocals and Biblical tales are both present and correct, but the soundtrack here is spare and spartan, each song stripped to its bare bones.

'Folklore' still echoes kindred spirits Nick Cave and The Gun Club, but manages to retain the same air of bleak, brooding menace throughout its cunningly concise 30 or so minutes without really ever sounding like anyone else. Its four original songs are like death knells ringing in a desert night. Its six covers and traditional folk songs are, if anything, still more Gothic, the spellbinding 'Sinnerman' a high water mark. Deep, dark and dramatic, this is uneasy listening of the very best kind.

PAUL REES

VERA CRUISE

Come Alone And Fall Apart

(Loose)

KKKK

Another good reason to be cheerful about British rock.

IF ONLY all debuts showed as much promise as 'Come Alone and Fall Apart', the opening salvo from Vera Cruise. Signed to alt-country label Loose Records, the Glaswegian five-piece have delivered an astonishing album

that manages to both tug at the heartstrings with its slow burning introspection, and let rip where it counts with raw energised alt-rock.

'Keep All The Lies' rides on a catchy idiosyncratic riff straight out of the Sebadoh rule-book, while 'Wasted Sounds', with its spine-tingling melody, soaring slide guitar and singer Paul Smith's dreamy vocals will make the hardest of heart melt. But it's with the subliminal closing song 'Comes And Goes' that the emotional buttons are all fully and firmly pressed. Listen and weep.

CATHERINE CHAMBERS

NINNGHIZHIDDA

Demigod

(Displeased Records)

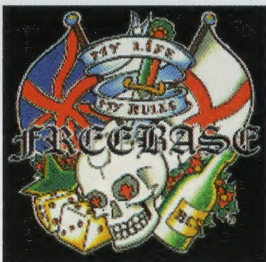
KKK

Their name is a 'horned serpent of the depths' from apocryphal occult manifesto 'Necronomicon', apparently.

MAJESTIC BLACK metallers Ninnghizhidda aspire to reach a place somewhere between the towering grandeur of Norwegian kings Dimmu Borgir and the keyboard-laden stomp of Swiss electro-black metallers Samael. With 'Demigod', the Germans have actually done a fairly good job of re-creating the complex, soaring dynamics of the former, and the melody-infused thunder of the latter band.

Though they're hardly doing anything original or new, Ninnghizhidda's masterful blend of cascading keys, Gothic atmospherics, and even a decent amount of guitar solos – unusual for a black metal act – nonetheless combine to make 'Demigod' a sturdy, polished and satisfying enough addition to the genre. Unpronounceable name notwithstanding.

DANIEL LUKES



FREEBASE

My Life My Rules

(Die Hard/Hard Boiled)

KKKK

Vein-popping metallic streetcore from the UK's toughest.

ONE GOOD reason to buy the second album from UK hardcore bruisers Freebase is that they look like they will almost certainly smash your face in if you don't. That aside, 'My Life My Rules' is concrete proof that this enduring band have come of age. A gripping barrage of lurching, beatdown riffage and whiplash-inducing speed; songs like 'Suicide Note' and the frankly charming 'C**t Hunter' simply reek of illicit boozing sessions, late night fistcuffs and the frustrated roar of the disenfranchised.

Admittedly, Freebase offer little in the way of subtlety, either musical or lyrical, but for those with a burning desire to shotgun cans of lager and let off some steam in a swirling circle-pit, 'My Life My Rules' more than does the job.

DOM LAWSON



THE VINES

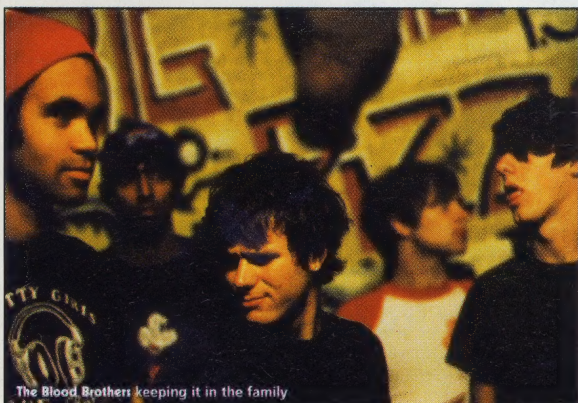
Highly Evolved

(Heavenly)

KKK

THESE ARE dangerous times to be a rock 'n' roll star, let alone a rock 'n' roll fan. Since the success of The Strokes, The White Stripes and The Hives suggested that you didn't need baggy sportswear and superfluous turntablists to win gin-u-wine rock stardom, major labels have sensed that there might be quite a few shekels to be squeezed from this low-rent, low-maintenance punk renaissance.

There's gold in them thar garages, and A&R bods are flinging their chequebooks at every scruffy kid with a thriftstore guitar and a broken amp. Everyone wants a Strokes-a-like on their roster and the credit for discovering the next genius skulking in the suburban shadows. It's like grunge never happened, as no-hoper rockers get their fat record contracts, unaware that when the trend changes again they'll be left cold and unloved on the kerb without a pair of Converse sneakers to rub together. At least when the vacant fashionistas started wear-





NEGATIVE CREEPERS

ULTRA-HYPED AUSSIES FALL SHORT OF SONIC NIRVANA

ing their fake Motörhead tees they didn't f**k anyone's careers over; this kind of clueless bandwagon-chasing is gonna leave a lot of decent bands high 'n' dry in a couple of years.

More damaging still is the intense pressure and hype placed upon these young bands, expected to turn out a masterpiece and claim their place in the Hall Of Fame with their first album. Which is where The Vines come in. Already countless inches of press coverage have been dribbled over singer/guitarist Craig Nicholls' 'Cobain-esque good looks and intensity, his little breakdowns and potential crack-ups. The man himself is complicit, telling tales of suicidal tendencies with all the faux-naïve candour of a Manics fan displaying self-inflicted wounds.

For those of you too slow to have pieced together the 'subtle' message the hype-machine is feeding you, The Vines = The New Nirvana. The conspiracy is so blatant, you almost wonder whether the boys were put through some pop-grunge finish-

ing school in their native Sydney before relocating to LA with Rob Schnapf (Foo Fighters) to record 'Highly Evolved'. Or maybe they were hatched in a GM factory from DNA recovered from one of Cobain's old guitars.

Not that there's anything wrong with wearing your influences on your sleeves. But The Vines are no Nirvana. Sure, Nicholls manages an impressive, blood-curdling scream on the fitful tantrum of the opening title-track, and the slashing riff at the heart of 'Outtathaway!' approximates the gilded spasm that powered '...Teen Spirit'. But -

and herein lies the flaw in (the band's US paymasters) Capitol's plan to market Nicholls as Cobain Mk.2 - The Vines only recall Nirvana when trying really, *really* f**kin' hard to sound like them. They're more faint echoes of that band than any rightful heirs.

The irony is that The Vines are actually pretty good. They certainly have their songwriting chops down; 'Highly Evolved' slips from style to style with ease, the robes they borrow fitting them well, be they dreamy psychedelia ('Autumn Shade'), doom-laden feedback whiteouts ('1969', a surface-impressive

exercise in comedown rock), or pulverising power-pop ('Get Free', which boasts a killer riff-fout). They also make a few ill-advised excursions - 'Country Ward', a hatefully twee burst of country-psyche, or the drippy drone of 'Mary Jane' - although all is forgiven when 'Factory' kicks in, all ragged punky-reggae-party moves and charming, charismatic tunefulness. It's almost enough to gloss over your unease that, ace though The Vines are at aping other peoples' sounds, they have precious little identity of their own.

But it's nowhere near enough to satisfy the hunger stoked for this record. The studio-polished take of 'Factory' here is less fun than the lo-fi version released on lowly seven-inch last year. Which is a neat metaphor for The Vines' dilemma, really: an okay band polished up as The Second Coming, an expectation even the greatest of bands would disappoint, and which the too-often-average Vines fall way short of.

One wonders how the self-consciously 'sensitive' Nicholls

will handle the inevitable fallout, when the truth becomes apparent. But your sympathy should probably be reserved for the bands who've released much better albums this year (Enon's 'High Society', for example) but who won't enjoy anywhere near the same attention as The Vines because they dare to temper their accessible noise with a little invention and inspiration, thus ill-fitting a clueless industry's moronic formats for success.

The Vines have delivered a pleasing but shallow pop-rock record. Perhaps the same could've been argued of 'Nevermind'. But that album's blast of metallicised bubblegum was *sublime*; 'Highly Evolved' is too often a dull retreat of other peoples' glories, evoking the sound, but never the righteous, electrifying, *deathless* fury. If we do have to live through a grunge revival, rather these sunshine-seeking pop kids than the grizzled sonic-goates offered by Puddle Of Mudd, Nickelback et al. But we deserve more.

STEVIE CHICK

LISTENING POST Five aural delights on 'Highly Evolved'...

04:00: 'Outtathaway!' begins its bold-faced theft from '...Teen Spirit', tripwire guitars, charred vocals and all...

10:39: Craig Nicholls manages single 14-second scream without taking a breath, rivalling Bill Withers on the summery classic 'Lovely Day'.

16:23: Nicholls' vocals disintegrate into a pool of anguished phlegm, impressing anyone who's never heard 'In Utero'.

18:49: Über-grungey guitars kick sand in the face of 'Factory'.

30:22: Ritual abuse of flange and wah-wah pedals fails to convince that the drippy slop of 'Mary-Jane' is, in fact, 'psychedelic'.

